A WARM MODELO

Jenn left me two weeks before the end of my sophomore year. I figured it was because she was a senior and didn't want to graduate while still dating some kid in high school. I wouldn't have minded. I loved older girls. She was just my type too—pale, emo, with Latina features.

Well, she left me. I assumed it was for her ex, who I was told had verbally abused her. She had told me some things about him that made me think, yeah, maybe she went back. I remember telling my brother about how she told me her ex would touch her and grab her even when she told him to stop stop stop. My brother just told me I should probably get used to hearing stories like that from girls.

Anywho, in between classes I tried following all the routes she took through the halls but I could never find her. That pissed me off more than it should have. I wanted her to see me. I wanted her to get nervous and look straight ahead, walking awkwardly to class but that never happened.

After graduation, my buddy Chris, who was 19, and Devin, who was my age, came through my house smoking. I went to take a piss and heard them talking. I couldn't make out what they were saying, but Devin sounded uncomfortable.

When I came back, Devin was leaving. I asked him why, but he didn't really answer or look at me. I didn't blame him.

Chris and I sat there for a while before he said he needed to be honest with me.

"Go ahead, man."

"I know you and Jenn have had history, but I know her friends. I was at some get-together like two weeks ago or something, and I was high and, like, horny and made a move on Jenn. No one saw it."

"Then what happened?"

"Well, shit."

I already knew where this was going.

"Um, we went to mine, and... we had sex and stuff."

"Oh."

"You're my friend, ok, man? Well, not even a friend. A family member. uh to me, at least. And I can't be around you lying or pretending it hadn't happened. That wouldn't be right. Do you get where I'm coming from?"

"...Yeah. I do. Kinda."

"What do you mean, 'kinda'?"

"A family member wouldn't do that to me. I know my brother and my cousins very well. They wouldn't do that, it wouldn't be right."

He sat there silently for a minute.

"I understand, man," he said, looking straight ahead.

"This," I said, "this is really fucked up."

I stood up while he sat on the couch. I think he expected me to rush at him. He had an ugly face, so I wouldn't have done that much damage if I did, but instead I walked toward the door.

Then I ran.

I ran so fast I didn't even want to look behind me. I didn't know if Chris was following me. I didn't know if anybody was following me. I just ran.

It was around 10 at night, and half the streetlights in the neighborhood were broken. I nearly ate shit on the sidewalk but I kept going.

The park was only a few streets away by then. The lights there were always broken too, but somehow they looked greener in the moonlight. I finally slowed down when I reached it. Across a few streets was a 7-Eleven.

I went nearby and found some bum near the alley. He asked if I had any change.

"How about I buy us a beer?" I asked.

"You're not old enough, kid," he replied.

"I'll give you the money. Just don't play me. My brother's involved with JOKERZ."

JOKERZ was a local gang and my brother wasn't in it.

"Alright."

He came back and bought me a tall boy, Modelo. I asked him if he wanted to talk or if I could drink with him there.

"Man," he said, "thanks for the beer, kiddo, but you need to leave, bro. The cops are gonna make laps here like a bitch. I can't be seen with you, dog."

"I just want someone to talk to or chill with."

"Go to church then, homie. Talk to God. I don't give a fuck what mommy issues you got going on, alright? Thank you and goodnight."

"Okay," I said as I turned, holding my bag. "Goodnight."

I walked back to the dark park and sat on a bench in a more shaded area under the trees. I didn't have a phone or anyone to reach out to. All I had were the angry thoughts in my head.

Of all the friends and shitty people I had tolerated in my life, Chris was one of the people I'd known the longest. I grew up with him. I would've lied for that guy in any situation he was in. I would've covered for him. I would've taken his side.

I guess loyalty doesn't resonate with a man who wants to feel something so urgently on his dick.

I sat there waiting.

I expected someone to find me there drinking alone. A stranger. A family member. Even Chris or Jenn. Someone trying to comfort me. But no one came.

I sat there sipping slowly on the bad, warm beer, as my tears were drying on my face. I imagined different friends in my life who weren't real who loved me and were more than I could've asked for.

I even imagined a girlfriend with all the features I mentioned and softness I wanted. She was sitting beside me on that bench, holding me there. She had a gentle smile, the kind that came from a place of love and empathy and compassion. Her hand was resting on my thigh.

I imagined her telling me everything was going to be okay without saying it.

The different reality made me feel good while I sat there sipping my beer, looking out at the pretty green, dark grass.

It wasn't that bad of a night at all.